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**RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND ALL
FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION**

Written statement submitted by the Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers),
a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in
accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31

[31 December 1999]

1 "Through the years Friends (Quakers) have been known for their efforts to translate their religious beliefs into everyday life, for their emphasis on simplicity, and for their belief in silent meditation as a form of corporate worship. Since their earliest days Friends have been opposed to war and to slavery. They have a history of dissent from prevailing practices that deny the equality and the value of each person. In the United States they have long been concerned with improving the conditions in mental hospitals and prisons, alleviating the suffering of the unemployed, and the dispossessed, and working for racial equality. They seek to lessen international tensions by non-violent methods."¹

2 Since 1917, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has worked for non-violent resolution to conflict, economic and social justice, and has provided humanitarian aid to those in situations of war or natural disaster. This work is based directly on the tenets of Quakerism (begun in 1652), the belief of "God in every person".

3 Quakers were among the first in the United States to call for the abolition of slavery, working with the Underground Railroad, and were extremely active in the civil rights movement in the United States and the abolition of apartheid in South Africa. As the American service organization of Quakers, AFSC works within the United States, but also works around the globe. That work includes a number of AFSC-local partnerships focused on lessening racism and ethnic violence.

4 In the Andean region, AFSC has formed partnerships with indigenous and Black groups, supporting their demands for economic, social and cultural as well as political rights. With both groups, AFSC has supported struggles for land rights, ethnic education and public recognition of their contributions in the histories of their respective countries. In Ecuador, Black organizations have developed legislative proposals with the support of Colombian Black lawyers and organizations. A recent binational meeting (Colombia and Ecuador) in Chota, Ecuador, included Black leaders from Uruguay, Venezuela and Peru. A major theme was preparation for and contributions to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. In Peru, AFSC has partnered with the Peruvian Black Movement, a non-governmental organization working on ethnic education and interracial tolerance between Ecuador and Chile. An AFSC programme that began in Hungary has assisted Roma youth in their plan to develop educational tolerance curricula for Hungarian schools. In October 1999, AFSC staff organized a youth conference around issues of racism and tolerance in South-East Asia. A long-running programme has followed issues of contemporary slavery, particularly in areas of North Africa. In the United States, Latin American youth from the Asian-Pacific region met in Portland, Oregon, to share cultural experiences and issues faced by youth of colour; in Chicago, the African-American Youth Empowerment Program has developed an extensive network of mentors for a large group of urban young people and has made a commitment to an international perspective in their work.

5 AFSC has from its inception been involved in work on the peaceful resolution of racial, ethnic and religious conflict. Programmes have brought together people from Sri Lanka, the former Yugoslavia and Haiti to engage in constructive problem-solving dialogues on the conflicts in their countries.

6. Given the history and current work of the organization, AFSC is in a unique position to contribute to the preparations for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in 2001.

7. The United Nations has been a leader in the international work of eliminating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance. Beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Declaration and International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the three Decades to Combat Racial Discrimination, the United Nations has, as a body, worked diligently and consistently to assist nations to end the scourge of racism.

8. During its fifty-fifth session in August 1999, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) adopted decision 5 including a programme of work for the World Conference as well as specific suggestions for its agenda (see A/54/18, para. 574). The American Friends Service Committee, in consideration of its long history of work against racism and its current programmes, respectfully submits the following suggestions for specific agenda items which lie within the scope of the suggestions put forth by CERD in paragraph 6 of its decision:

- (a) Processes of racial reconciliation,
- (b) Racial discrimination against indigenous populations:
 - (i) Loss of culture, land, traditional forms of governance and economic globalization have contributed to the marginalization of indigenous peoples around the world. The American Friends Service Committee, long committed to partnership with and the rights of indigenous peoples, suggests that this item, developed by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, be broadened to include debate on preservation of traditional culture, restoration of land rights, consideration of traditional forms of governance, and the effects of economic globalization on indigenous communities,
 - (ii) The American Friends Service Committee respectfully requests the inclusion of Africans in all of the Americas as an element for the agenda of the Conference. Although Africans are not indigenous to the Americas, they face many of the same problems as indigenous groups (land rights issues, environmental degradation, discrimination, etc.) without the foundation of declarations such as International Labour Organization on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (Convention No. 169) and the draft United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples,

(c) All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights:

- (i) Slavery, both historic and contemporary, has had deleterious effects on people, communities, cultures and nations. The American Friends Service Committee encourages the Commission on Human Rights to include a specific agenda item on both contemporary and historical slavery;
- (ii) United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan has stated that "human rights are foreign to no culture and native to all nations; they are universal".² In the spirit of this statement, the American Friends Service Committee suggests that the Commission on Human Rights include agenda items on migration and immigration, acknowledging that migrants and immigrants are covered under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights no matter what border they crossed.

(d) Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, challenge to peace, human rights, including the right to life, human dignity, stability and the rule of law:

- (i) Racism, whether covert or blatant, is a form of violence. The American Friends Service Committee, in its commitment to non-violence and demilitarization, suggests that economic and political stability cannot coexist with covert or blatant racism. The American Friends Service Committee commends CERD for its inclusion of item (d) on the agenda for the World Conference;
- (ii) The American Friends Service Committee affirms the goal of CERD to include stability and the rule of law on the agenda of the World Conference. In many countries, racial and ethnic minorities comprise the bulk of the people in prisons; this condition stems from many sources. During and after situations of racial or ethnic conflict, significant numbers of the "losing side" may be sent to languish in prisons. Discrimination leading to poverty and need affect racial and ethnic minorities, moving people to meet those needs in many ways, some of which are considered criminal by national legal systems. The death penalty, still an option in a handful of countries, remains a significant cause for concern. Inclusion and discussion of these issues is critical for the development and maintenance of stable local, national and international governmental and non-governmental institutions;

(e) Incitement to racial hatred as a punishable offence:

Our vision as Quakers does not minimize for one instant the devastating consequences of hate crimes on those who are victims of such violence. In fact, we put those consequences at the heart of our vision and then explore the human possibilities for not only addressing past wrongs and harms, but also for identifying what can be done to establish new and right relationships in the future. For us, a spiritual understanding of justice involves not only accountability and

judgement, but responsibility for taking the more difficult and more hopeful path towards creating an ever-widening circle of right, respectful relationships between individuals and among peoples and communities. While we do not support increased criminal penalties for hate-crimes, we challenge ourselves and others, including those who support and those who oppose strong, inclusive hate-crimes legislation, to imagine what restorative justice might look like for both the victims and perpetrators of hate crimes;

(f) Effective measures for all segments of the population in the spirit of elimination of all forms of racial discrimination and intolerance:

The American Friends Service Committee encourages the Commission on Human Rights to remember and include women and youth within all of its deliberations and resolutions;

(g) Educational measures for all segments of the population in the spirit of the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination and intolerance:

The American Friends Service Committee commends CERD for its inclusion of educational measures in the scope of the Conference. Given the American Friends Service Committee's work with partners on the development of racial tolerance educational curricula in Hungary, Peru, Ecuador, the United States and, recently, in South-East Asia, we have seen the results of and ongoing need for this work;

(h) National commissions of human rights in the light of the Committee's General Recommendation XVII.

9. The American Friends Service Committee again commends the United Nations, the High Commission for Human Rights and the Committee to End Racial Discrimination in their efforts, and looks forward to the 2001 Conference.

Notes

¹ Beliefs and practices of the American Friends Service Committee, 1990.

² Human Rights Today: A United Nations Priority. United Nations Briefing Papers, Department of Public Information (United Nations publication, Sales No. E 98.I 22), preface.